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CHANCES AND CHANGES;

OR,

SCENES IN A GAMBLER'S LIFE.

By Henry C. Pedder

For in the foulness of th' example, vice
Instructive holds a mirror to the good.

EURIPIDES.

A Drama,

IN FIVE ACTS.



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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

Malcour

Mortimer.

Gaspard.

Beaumont

Franklin.

Arthur.

Edgar.

Hubert.

Gamblers.

Beatrice.

Isabel.

Eudora.

Spirit of Arthur's mother.

CHANCES AND CHANGES.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Garden by Moonlight.* ARTHUR.

Arthur. What a world is this, that in the distribution of its wealth, it should dispense with such unequal hand its benefits? Ay, even that our brightest hopes are oft defeated by the oppressive rule of poverty; while those more favored by capricious fortune's smiles, move on to the attainment of their wishes.

But see, here comes the polar star of all my hopes. If she but give me the assurance of her love, then am I satisfied. Possessed of this, I will defy the sordid thoughts of this dull earth; nor would I barter her sweet love for all the gold and silver which this wide world contains.

Enter ISABEL.

Thrice welcome, gentle Isabel. Almost I had despaired of you, and my soul grew dark. Now it is glorious sunrise in your presence, and I am myself again.

Isabel. Too much you flatter me, my love. Far better are you skilled in Cupid's arts than I supposed you were.

Arthur. Flattery, did you say? Use not that word. I like it not. To flatter and to fawn, may suit the common herd who hide their faces in becoming masks. But enough of this. I know, sweet one, that you but jest. See, how the moon arrayed in all her fairest robes, reminds us of those blissful nights, when, as the fair Selene, she would seek the Latinian Mount to kiss Endymion in his sleep.

Isabel. And by so doing, invites us to the theme of love. Is't not so?

Arthur. Gentle angel, what else should it be? Was not the night, with all its poetry, intended as the time when soul may meet with soul in sweet response, and all things syllable the name of love? Indeed is not the night that gentle season of our lives, when all things being enwrapt within a temporary calm, we rise above the grovelling thoughts of earth into a higher sphere of thought and sentiment!

Isabel. Ah! me.

Arthur. Instead of smiles, do you but give me sighs? Tell me, Isabel, wherefore is this so?

Isabel. Our fears are realized. This it is which makes me sad.

Arthur. That we must part? Is this your father's will?

Isabel. 'Tis even so. Your poverty is your crime; this is enough for him.

Arthur. Think you he is firm in his resolve?

Isabel. As firm as ever was the Medes and Persians' law, which once being made, could know no change.

Arthur. Can you not move him even by the sweet pleading of your filial love?

Isabel. Not even this avails me aught against his resolution. No, not even did I have a thousand tongues, and every tongue possess a daughter's sweetest eloquence, would this suffice to change his views.

Arthur. This being the case, then am I settled in my course of action. This night we part; this night shall witness my departure for another field less circumscribed. This done, Excelsior shall be my motto; nor will I cease till I have won the laurels of success, and thus made you mine. Say, say, sweet one; a few years hence should I return, will I still find you true?

Isabel. Have I so far withstood my father's anger for your love, and yet you trust me not? No, Arthur; be you where you may, I will be always as the faith-

ful sun-flower, turning to the sun. Sooner shall you lamp of heaven forget to shine, than I forget my promise.

Arthur. The gay, the gaudy glare of fashion's shrine, and the excitement of a city life ; all this may wean you from your present thoughts.

Isabel. Fear not, sweet love, on this account. For me, what is the din and bustle of a city life ; that hollow, artificial thing in which the seeming is more valued than the real, and where the daily routine is a puppet show, made up of fashion's fools, whose only office is to flutter, shine, and show themselves ! Think you, that all this pomp of costly fashion, pride, and nothingness, can ever wipe your image from my heart ? No, no ; the clouds may hide, but they can ne'er put out the sun.

Arthur. Isabel, this is more than I can bear. Say, say, sweet angel of my life, shall we submit, or shall we bid defiance to these bolts and bars with which an unrelenting father would imprison love ?

Isabel. Not so ; lest in so doing, we may repent at leisure what we do in haste—(*Village clock strikes*).—But hark ! The night is far advanced : I must away.

Arthur. So soon, and is there no appeal ?

Isabel. The time will come when we shall meet again. Meanwhile, let our loves lie buried in our silent breasts ; to sleep, but not to die.

Arthur. To sleep, and in that sleep to dream, perchance those dreams which ne'er will be ! Ah ! there's the point by which anticipation makes me feel that I am poor indeed. (A momentary pause.) But no, it must not be : it is unmanly thus to add a double sting to this already trying hour. But one kiss more, my love, and then farewell. If it be so that I must dream and dream, and only dream, I will so idolize you in my thoughts that you shall be as fair Callisto glorified into a bright and shining star ; so much your beauty shall transcend the things of earth.

Isabel. Farewell, my love, farewell. Remember, if we meet no more, true love being immortal, lives beyond

the grave. My heart is full ; I can no more ; farewell. *[Exit.]*

Arthur. Alas ! for that sad word farewell—that melancholy note of our souls in which the music of departing love becomes the funeral dirge of our hopes. Oh ! fortune, fortune, wherefore is it thus, that the career of love should be beset with thorns, and not with roses ? *[Exit.]*

SCENE II.—MORTIMER'S *apartments*—MORTIMER seated at table writing—Looks at his watch.

Mortimer.—Already eight, and they not here ? (A ring at the bell.) Ah ! that sounds like Gaspard's ring. I'd know his touch among a thousand ; it is so strongly characteristic of the man.

Enter GASPARD, BEAUMONT, and other gamblers.

Mortimer. Thrice welcome, gentlemen. But how comes it you are so late ?

Gaspard. Why, how goes the enemy ?

Mortimer. Past eight, and our engagement was for seven.

Gaspard. Well, well, we must apologize. And yet, did you but know the facts, you would not censure us.

Beaumont. In brief, a moment lend your ear, and we will give you welcome news.

Mortimer. So be it, then. Come, come, be seated, gentlemen, that I may be as wise as you are on this subject. *[They take seats.]* Come Gaspard, your's be the spoke-man's office upon this occasion.

Gaspard. A rat, a rat, fat, sleek and ready for the bait. Do you perceive the hint ?

Mortimer. 'Tis well. But are you sure of this ?

Beaumont. No doubt of it. We have taken his measure, and find him just the thing.

Mortimer. But yet another point. Is he a gentleman, or some low-priced dog whose presence may prove injurious to our interests ? For, mark you, although

we are known to ourselves as knaves, we must most carefully guard the respectability of appearances. It is by what we seem that we deceive the world, and thus succeed.

Gaspard. Upon this point do you give yourself no thought ; for even as the prudent mariner studies well his chart, avoiding here a quicksand, there a reef ; so likewise does the sagacious mind protect itself by its discriminating powers. Indeed, this well-directed caution is among the most precious gifts that we derive from our knowledge of the world. Fear not, therefore, Mortimer, I have too long studied human nature with its countless foibles, whims and strange peculiarities to be deceived in this.

Mortimer. Pardon me, Gaspard. For the moment I had forgotten the proverbial saying, that old birds are not to be caught with chaff. And now we'll drink success to our new-born enterprise. When Fortune smiles, 'tis well that Bacchus be propitiated.

Gaspard. A happy thought, and carried unanimously. Is it not so, good friends ?

[They bow in acquiescence, and then drink.]

Beaumont. If not for drinking, what a miserable existence this would be ?

Mortimer. Bread at pleasure, drink by measure ; this is the philosophy of life.

Beaumont. Not so, not so. One sip of wine will bathe the drooping spirits in delight, revive the old, inspire the young, and make the weary man forget his toil. Yet once more, therefore, ere we go, let us fill up the flowing bowl, and call on Bacchus, jolly god of laughing pleasures.

Mortimer. Come, gentlemen, we'll act on Beaumont's hint. It is the part of wisdom to be merry while we may.

[They drink again. As soon as they have finished drinking, a noise is heard without.]

Mortimer. Hear how the shallow mob bestow their plaudits on some demagogue.

Beaumont. Poor, simple creatures, puffed, indeed, with the importance of their freedom, yet far too often selling out their birthright for a mess of pottage. Let us be going.

Gaspard. Remarking as we go, that in the prosecution of our plans we may derive some useful hints from the far-sighted cunning of these subtle politicians.

Mortimer. Conceal it as we will, 'tis through the tricks and snares of well devised deception that we most surely meet success. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Street by Night.*

Enter MALCOUR followed by FRANKLIN.

Franklin. In the name of friendship I beseech you to reflect ere yet the season for reflection be o'erpast. Do but reason with yourself, and see the dangers which encompass you; the ruin and disgrace which must inevitably follow such a course as this.

Malcour. You are a noble fellow, Franklin, and your words are such as well become a friend. But as for me, I have already crossed the rubicon, and cannot at this crisis pause. Besides, there is a fascination in this game of chances which it is impossible for me to resist.

Franklin. If a man is only earnest in his resolutions nothing is impossible. Remember we are men, not merely instruments which every breath may play upon; nor are we slaves, except so far as we have put the eyes of conscience out, that she can no longer see to do her heaven inspired duty. To this you surely have not fallen yet?

Malcour (aside). How deeply his earnestness affects me! A few years since I had not needed this persuasion.

Franklin. You pause, you hesitate. May I not hope that you will yield to my request?

Malcour. Verily your words are true, and I confess

that you have moved me by this evidence of your friendship. But then, but then—. Ah! there's the point that makes me feel I am a slave.

Franklin. And for this vile intoxication which can only end in ruin, you are content to barter all those hopes and joys which cluster round a happy home, and which indeed make up the charm of life! Fie, fie, oh fie. It cannot be that reason so far prostitutes herself as to submit to this. Why e'en a dog will pause when by its instinct it perceives the approach of danger; and shall it be less than this with man—that wondrous compound where all nature seems to do her best? No, no, I'll not believe it so. Yet should it be, then is our boasted reason but a sham, and man the weakest, vilest thing on earth.

Malcour. Give me your hand, good friend, and with it let me give you my assurance that I'll think upon your words.

Franklin. Then why not on the dictates of your better nature act at once? To hesitate is sometimes to be lost, whereas in prompt decision we avoid at least that thief of time, procrastination.

Malcour. It is not in our power either to make or unmake ourselves in an instant. Besides, good Franklin, you forget the world has changed since you were young. Things which then seemed amiss receive the sanction now of custom and expediency, while even gray beards like yourself will stroke themselves, and say tis well. The world moves on, and as we move, our views of right and wrong demand a change.

Franklin. So it has always been; and so it doubtless will for ever be. The devil never lacks for ingenuity. The world has changed indeed since I was young! But what of this, since changing, it can never change those fundamental laws which give to virtue its reward, to vice its punishment? To wit, then, where is the advantage though it be respectable to sin, and though you even seem to sin successfully? Depend upon it, there must come a time when our evil deeds, like chickens, will come home to roost. But here are strangers this way coming. Let us move on.

Malcour. Not so. They are three friends of mine.

Franklin. Friends of yours ! Bless me, Malcour, there is something in that hungry looking fellow's appearance that causes me spontaneously to put my hands in my pockets. Look to it, if he is not a villain of the deepest dye, then has nature suddenly turned a fool and given him the outward signs of villainy to no interest. But no more. Our thoughts unsaid are our own.

Enter GASPARD, BEAUMONT, and another Gambler.

Gaspard. Come, come, Malcour, this is a sorry way to keep your promises. Already have we waited for you nearly half an hour.

Malcour. Pardon me, good sirs, for my apparent negligence. While on my way I met this friend, an old and valued friend. In his company the time has passed without my knowledge.

Gambler (aside to Beaumont). His presence bodes no good to our plans. He is too old a bird by far. Offend him, and thus throw him off his equipoise. In this alone is our opportunity.

Beaumont (sarcastically). At last then do I gaze upon the greatest of all prodigies—an old and valued friend !

Malcour. Why, Beaumont, how is this ? Is it a thing so rare to have a friend, that you regard it almost as a miracle ?

Beaumont. Upon my soul, it is to me a wondrous prodigy ; a sight, indeed, which gives me more surprise than I would feel if sudden discord took the place of law and order in the universe. What ! shall I behold a relic of that race which lived ere *Astrœa* left the earth, and not say, Behold a miracle ? Oh ! no ; impossible. For my part, I have always found that it required all the eyes of *Argus* to protect ourselves from our friends. With you, experience having taught you otherwise, you are the most fortunate man on earth.

Franklin. No more of this ; I'll hear no more ; nor will I be the jest of these impertinent meddlers, who,

measuring others by themselves, distort the world, and make the noblest actions seem a lie.

Gaspard. How I do despise these garrulous old men ; so windy, and so wondrous wise in their own conceits ! Indeed, they are like narrow necked bottles: the less they have in them the more noise they make in pouring it out.

Franklin. Imperious knave, know you of whom you speak ?

Malcour. Come, gentlemen, this must not be. By the sweet name of friend I would address you all ; entreating you to dismiss this unbecoming attitude.

Gaspard. Malcour, do you accompany us ? It was for this, and not for any idle war of words, we came. Remember, time and tide for no man wait.

Malcour. It is an engagement, and shall be kept. Franklin, do you excuse me ? *[Going.]*

Franklin. Rash, foolish, self-destroying man ; so soon have you outgrown your better mood, and like a poor deluded fool, plunge headlong to destruction ! Turn but an instant inwardly your eyes, and see how conscience weeps because you heed her not. Ay, more than this ; remember that there is a time in our lives when our destinies hang as 'twere upon the issue of a moment. We choose, and in the choice decide the future as a heaven or a hell.

Gaspard. (*To Franklin.*) See here, good Sir, Malcour is a man ; and, being such, hath long ere this attained the power of discretion. Here let us rest our arguments, and to his inclination leave the issue.

Malcour. Then, with my inclination let it be. Life is at best a lottery. A lottery, therefore, it shall be. In our wisest moods we are but straws, being borne we know not where. To chance we leave the rest.

Exeunt MALCOUR, GASPARD, BEAUMONT and Gambler: as they are in the act of leaving, MORTIMER enters unperceived by the others and plucks the Gambler's sleeve ; at which he returns, and MORTIMER and he whisper together.

Franklin. Farewell, thou poor, deluded wretch. Ere you have seen the end you will a thousand times regret your choice. *[Exit.]*

MORTIMER and GAMBLER coming forward.

Mortimer. Malcour, did you say? Tell me again, that I be sure my senses do not play the cheat.

Gambler. Such is the name. But, how strangely it affects you. Do you know him?

Mortimer. It is a name which fills me with strange thoughts. But I will not go back into the buried past. The future is the question. Yes, the future is the question. And yet 'tis strange; 'tis strange how fickle are the tides of life. Indeed, so truly are we baffled by the contradictions of this ever-changing world, that no man can safely say to-morrow will be this or that; no, not e'en to the minntest trifles of his life. We plan, contrive, abandon, and revise; while in an instant comes a change, and we are startled by some unexpected circumstance, more powerful than all preceding calculations, dreams, and stratagems. Come, come, good friend, let us away at once. Success is but the use we make of our opportunities; and he is wisest who most wisely sees that this is so.

Gambler. To action, therefore, else the wind may change. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Parlor.*

Enter BEATRICE and ISABEL.

Isabel. Come, come, sweet mother, let me persuade you to dismiss this mood. 'Tis but a whim; one of those idle fancies which perplex the mind without a cause. Away, then, with it; while the better to assist you to this end, I summon to my aid sweet music's soothing influence. Perchance 'twill prove more eloquent than my poor words.

(*Commences playing.*)

Beatrice. No more of music, Isabel ; let me hear no more of music. There is a sense of sadness stealing over me ; a shadow, as it were, of some approaching ill, which renders me unfit for music's gentle harmonies.

Isabel. No, no, sweet mother, there is no heart that music cannot soothe ; no mood, no passion in the human soul but finds its food in music. See, I will adapt my strain to suit your mood.

(*Commences playing a sentimental air.*)

Beatrice. Not so, my child, not so. In my anticipation I have so far lost the sense of tune that e'en the sweetest music is but discord to my ear.

Isabel. A curse on this anticipation, which inflicts more ills than e'er were dreamed of by reality. It is the scourge of our nature that we tremble in our thoughts before those ills which never come ; and in anticipation mourn the loss of that we never lose.

Beatrice. So says the wisdom of the world ; and it is doubtless true to some extent. But woman was made for love, not for philosophy ; and where we love, we cannot but anticipate. Indeed, such is the constitution of a woman's soul, that where she loves she lives but in that love. It is her world, her heaven ; yea, her all in all. Take it away, and life is but a blank, a dreary nothingness ; no more.

Isabel. And you in loving, and being in turn beloved, possess the measure of a woman's happiness. Besides, if we may call the future an effect of which the present is the cause, e'en here you are the happiest of the happy. See, are you not among the favored few who bask in fortune's sunshine, your wishes and your means being equal ? It is the poor who, as they drag their weary way along, stop every now and then to sigh. It is their place to sigh. But yours should be a sweet perennial smile, unclouded by the common cares of life.

Beatrice. Nonsense ! nonsense ! Prythee, Isabel, think you that wealth excludes us from the vicissi-

tudes of life—those many heart-burns, aches, and pains which meet humanity at every step? If so, at once do you dispel the illusion from your mind. True happiness is not the growth of wealth, or pomp, or mere renown. It is a state dependent on the world within. But see, here comes Eudora. I would speak with her alone.

Isabel. If you prefer my room to my company, be it so. Where there are secrets I would have no part. But mark you, mother, I would caution you against my most insidious aunt. She is a woman of the world, and as such is dangerous. [*Exit.*]

Enter EUDORA.

Beatrice. How now, good sister, what of news? With me the time hangs heavily, yielding little else than dark anticipation.

Eudora. Between us then the difference is but this—with you it is anticipation, with me reality.

Beatrice. Whatever it may be, be equal to your word. But tell me, wherefore do you look at me so earnestly?

Eudora. That I may pity you, and learn to hate my brother.

Beatrice. That you may pity me, and learn to hate my husband? It seems to me I do but dream.

Eudora. Nay, rather say that hitherto you have been living in a dream, that you have been the victim of a fond delusion soon to end. The dream will soon be over; the reality has yet to come.

Beatrice. Speak on, Eudora, I beseech you. Let me know the worst at once. If it be so that night approaches, let me know in time, that when it comes I may have weaned myself from earth, and in my resignation rob adversity of one half its sting.

Eudora. Your husband is a knave; a base frequenter of those gambling hells in which the devil acts as master of the ceremonies, and where fools lose first their money, then their characters.

Beatrice. Great heavens! No, I cannot credit this. It cannot be; it is not so. Perchance it may be one

among the many falsehoods of this busy talking world, whose pleasure is to murder every honest name. It is the voice of slander which would murder thus my hopes.

Eudora. Beatrice, you are to me a mystery. For my part, I cannot understand this sightless love which renders you the easy dupe of one who is beyond a doubt, a most consummate hypocrite.

Beatrice. Give me some proof. Till then I will believe you not.

Eudora. If that be all, you shall be amply satisfied. It is so hard to wean you silly creatures from your idols made of clay. This way, and you shall have enough of proof. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Gambling Saloon, lighted up. Several persons in the rear engaged in playing.*

MALCOUR and GASPARD coming forward.

Malcour. Persuade me not. I am no more myself, but like some wandering wretch who meets the tempest of the wintry blast, am blown about I know not where. Thus I destroy these execrable instruments of fortune—thus. (*Destroys some cards which he holds in his hand*). For me they have no further charm.

Gaspard. Come, come, this mood but ill becomes a man.

Malcour. A man, indeed! Can I be a man and be the slave of this infatuation which has ended in my ruin? No, no. To be a man is to control the baser parts of our nature. Where has been my power in this?

Gaspard. It is but a game of chance. In the next hand you may prove more fortunate.

Malcour. Chance! What is chance to me? 'Tis but a lie, a snare and a delusion fit for dotards and for fools—a fascinating syren which allures us on and on to leave us in the vortex of despair.

Gaspard. But does it follow that because you lose your money you should also lose your wits? You are

not the first, nor will you be the last to meet with disappointment.

Malcour. Call it not disappointment, Gaspard, but remorse, that deepest of all pangs when conscience turns upon itself, and our evil actions from their secret corners creep, like skeletons, whose only pleasure is to torture us. Far better than to come to this that I had ne'er been born ; else living, had instead been as the starving wretch who sinks within the arms of lean and tattered want. Yes, yes, a thousand times better this ; for there the scourge defeats itself when it has done its most, and in its conquest makes its captive free, while here 'tis as a worm that gnaws and eats me inch by inch, prolonging life to suit alone its cruel sport.

Gaspard. Ay, ay, rail on, nor will I chide you for your empty vamping. When you are cool, and judgment has assumed her seat, you will regret this wordy stuff which in the end means much of nothing.

Malcour. No, never. Turn where I will, I am pursued by dreams of dreadful shape, forebodings which are as the darkest furies to my soul. In vain I strive and seek for consolation in a maze of sophistries. 'Tis all in vain. My hopes are shattered, and the future, like an awful chasm, opens up before me. I am undone, and you have been my ruin.

Gaspard. And from the furnace kept myself unhurt ! At least so seem your words. See, here is my purse. [*Offers him his purse.*] If you will still regard me as your enemy, let this suffice to prove I am your friend.

Malcour. Not so, not so. Pry'thee forgive me, Gaspard. If I have wronged you, let my distraction be as my excuse. But for your money, keep it, friend. I never can rebuild myself again.

Gaspard. But should a desperate hope present itself ?

Malcour. A hope ! There is no hope that can support me in this vortex of despair.

Gaspard. A hope there is if you will only act. Yea, still a chance by which you may regain your loss.

Malcour. Do you but name it ; and I will seize upon it with the desperation of a dying man.

Gaspard. Your wife has jewels. Now what are jewels to a husband's happiness?

Malcour. Am I so base that I have come to this? No, Gaspard, no ; I may be vile, but cannot stoop to this.

Gaspard. Your weakness makes the evil greater than it is. The end will justify the means. Let this become your warrant. Meantime let us move on, and talk the matter over as we go.

Malcour. From small beginnings we are driven to most desperate ends. [*Exeunt.*]

[*MORTIMER and a few other gamblers coming forward.*]

Mortimer. So far, so good. The charm succeeds, and with the stride of an inexorable fate he moves on to his doom. So, so, 'tis well. The incubation of one little sin will soon pervade the whole of nature.

Gambler. In his credulity the fool believes the world is made of honest men ; whereas 'tis made up of such stuff that men will buy and sell each other for a pittance.

Mortimer. Here is his weakness ; this the point we play upon. But of this enough. Meanwhile 'tis our province to pursue our plans, and with the eyes of Argus watch the progress of events. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A room—Beatrice and Eudora rising from a table.*

Eudora. Art yet convinced, or do you still demand more proof?

Beatrice. Too true, alas ! too true.

Eudora. And being true, will you submit to it?

Beatrice. Though guilty, is he not my husband still? Ah ! yes, though even I should lose the world, I cannot blot his image from my heart.

Eudora. Tut, tut, these are but idle words. Look you, Beatrice, have you so long journeyed through the world, and not discovered that the curse of woman is

her weak credulity? In short, have you so far attained the years of womanhood, and not seen that this is a world of facts and stern realities—a world, indeed, in which this dreamy state of love and poetry is but a sham, deceiving most where most it promises?

Beatrice. Not so, not so; for still my thoughts, in spite of all my shattered hopes, will run back to my days of early love—those charming dreams where every moment was an age of bliss; a sweet transporting joy, too pure, too fair to die.

Eudora. Pshaw, you disgust me with this puerile sensibility. Action, not submission, is the becoming course for every injured woman. Besides, we have outgrown that age when woman by an act of marriage made herself a slave for whom there could be no release. In our day, we change our husbands as we do our garments: they suit no longer, and that is enough. And let me ask you is it not enough? To wit, as in the present case, when marriage has become a mere mockery, a sham; where is the woman who would not rather free herself than bear in silence all the stings and torments of an ignominious bondage?

Beatrice. Speak not so thoughtlessly, Eudora. Yours is but a shallow estimate, dealing with the surface only; while the profounder depths of human nature are beyond its reach: too subtle for that vulgar sense which breeds these modern innovations, these pernicious tendencies.

Eudora. Nay, start not at my words. I am your elder both in years and experience, therefore more familiar with the shifting currents of this ever-changing life. With me, I measure all things by the test of reason and expediency; with you, 'tis all weak, puerile, mawkish sensibility. And now, my errand having filled, adieu. When next we meet, you will be in a better mood to heed my teaching. [*Exit.*]

Beatrice. Adieu. Our sentiments being at war, we are better friends at a distance. [*Enter FRANKLIN, unperceived by BEATRICE.*] Alone I will endure my grief; nor shall the outside world perceive that there is aught but sunshine in my soul. What though he wrong me,

is it not a woman's nature to conceal the faults of those she loves? Yea, even though in the deep silence of her grief, she heap the weight of Ossa and Pelion on her heart, yet will she not refuse the burden. To rant, and rave, and hold up our wrongs before the public gaze, may suit the common herd who seek a vulgar notoriety. For me, however, come what may, unto myself, my womanhood, I will be true.

Franklin (coming forward). Still there is one in whom you may confide, and run no risk in trusting to his friendship.

Beatrice. Methought I was alone, else had I not expressed myself so freely. Yet, most venerable Franklin, I but too well know without a reason you had not thus intruded on my privacy.

Franklin. As you surmise, there is a cause, of which the subject matter touches on your welfare and your happiness. To speak more plainly, it is but a short time since I parted with your husband—a poor, weak man, who, walking in his sleep, comes suddenly on the verge of a great precipice.

Beatrice. Alas! then were Eudora's words correct, and I am lost, undone.

Franklin. Nay, nay, not so. It is not yet so dark that we can trace no gleam of light. Ere yet the sin be full grown, we may kill it by some neutralizing influence.

Beatrice. Now I perceive it all. I am awake, and see things as they are. For months the incubation has been going on, while I deceived myself, because my love being pure did naught suspect. Ah! even when in my maturer moods I would remonstrate with him on that change, the cause of which I then so little understood, 'twas but a little effort that it cost to put me off. 'Twas this, 'twas that; whate'er the reason given, it sufficed. I loved him, trusted, and believed. Now I've outlived my dream; and I must bid a long farewell to all my happiness.

Franklin. Not so. All other remedies having failed, there yet is one which may reclaim him, even though he should have reached that state when con-

science like a sluggard sleeps, and habit almost has become a second nature. In your persuasion is your strength.

Beatrice. If this be all, then is there left but little hope. Good sir, what can a woman do when wisdom such as yours has failed?

Franklin. Nevertheless, do you proceed as I advise; nor do you doubt that there is more of eloquence in the sweet pleading of a woman's tears than all the arguments which all the wisest men possess. Indeed, it is among the special graces of your sex that woman may at times become as gentle spring, light floating in a cloud of flowers; while by the sweet mysterious influence of her being, she weaves the life of heaven into the soul of man, illumines his mind, and purifies his heart. These being your weapons, will you hesitate?

Beatrice. Most noble and most generous friend; almost your eloquence fills me with new hopes.

Franklin. To this end, therefore, do you direct your efforts. If then you fail, you will at least have done your duty.

Beatrice. Then come, sweet duty, doubly sweetened by my love. If he has still a spark of nature left, then shall my prayers be as the gently falling dew, soft penetrating into the finer elements of his soul. If in his obduracy he will hear me not, then is the failure none of mine. For my part, I will plead with all my tenderness; yea, with the deepest pathos of a woman's being. Exceeding this I can no more.

Franklin. This done; well done. At best 'tis but our province to deserve success. To grant it is the prerogative of heaven. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An Open Space by Night.*

Enter ARTHUR, EDGAR, and HUBERT.

Arthur. This was the hour, this the very spot.

Edgar. Nonsense, man, you but imagine it. 'Twas but an idle phantasy, the product of a diseased imagination ; nothing more.

Arthur. Nay, on my soul it were as easy to convince me that this firm and solid earth is but a myth ; ourselves imagination ; and the resplendent beauty of yon golden fretted vault, the frenzy of a wild, disordered brain. Strange it may seem, but in so seeming it is true withal.

Hubert. What seemed it like ? Was it in human form, or like those strange monstrosities which sometimes flit before the sick man's mind ; making his sleep a hideous nightmare ?

Edgar. Or better still, the reflex action of our friend's own mind—the legitimate offspring of an overloaded stomach.

Hubert. Or else too free indulgence of another kind. Come, Arthur, is it not so, that having drank too freely you mistook your shadow for a ghost ? Come, come, admit the fact, and say that you were drunk.

Arthur. Good friends, if I afford you cause for mirth you are most welcome to your sport. Be this, however, as it may, what I have said, I reaffirm ; nor do I deviate one iota from the truth. (*Starting suddenly*). Yet sec, it comes again. Speak Edgar, Hubert speak. Can you not see that this is no inhabitant of earth ? Yea, e'en as though the fairest beauties of all worlds were concentrated in one glance ; an index to a soul such as I have never seen before.

Edgar. To me 'tis vacancy ; I see nothing.

Hubert. Nor I. Upon my honor as a man, I do believe our friend has lost his wits.

Edgar. If he was drunk last night, he is most surely sober now.

Arthur. Still, still it comes, and yet you see it not ? Can it be that I but dream ? No, no, it is no dream ; for see, it comes still nearer, and becomes more visible. (*Spirit gradually appears*). Speak, speak, thou glorious apparition, speak ; or else I die in my suspense. (*Spirit appears more fully and beckons to Arthur*). See, see, it beckons me. What say you, gentlemen, shall I obey ?

Spirit. Fear not, Arthur. I am here not as an idle ghost who hovers near the earth because unfit for any higher sphere. 'Twixt me and thee there is a bond more closely interwoven than you dream of. If you would hear me more, obey and follow me. (*Glides off the stage, beckoning Arthur to follow*).

Arthur. Follow thee, thou bright, angelic being ! Yea verily, I will. Whate'er thou art, I'll know thee more. [*Exit.*]

Hubert. What say you, Edgar ? How runs your blood ?

Edgar. Almost as cold as ice ; so much this something, nothing, whatever it may be, has freezed the circulation in my veins. Let us away, and leave this place. It savors too much of the grave for me.

Hubert. With all my heart, and so say I. Where nature is so weird and strange, the devil must be near at hand. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*The Sea-shore. Night.*

Enter ARTHUR.

Arthur. Can it be so, that after all, my senses play the cheat, while I am left to speak but with the vacant air, and listen to the music of the rolling waves ? No, no, it cannot be that e'er a dream so fair should be so false. (*Sudden appearance of a supernatural*

light). But soft, it comes again. See, see, already it is here.

Spirit appears.

Spirit. Arthur, from my presence do you fear no harm. I was your mother in the flesh—I am your mother still; for though in death we shuffle off the mortal coil, we still take that into the other world which makes up our characters. Indeed, the state which men call death is but a change through which we pass on to a higher life. 'Tis true we fall asleep, and seem to die, but 'tis a seeming, and no more. So far do you perceive the meaning of my words?

Arthur. Speak on, celestial being, speak on.

Spirit. A moment then do you attend, while by the opening of your inner sight you shall perceive a certain thing which yet lies buried in the future. For this have I appeared, lest in the common routine of events, the time may move too slowly for your happiness. So far do you perceive the meaning of my words?

Arthur. Speak on, celestial being, speak on.

Spirit. Be therefore wise, and act upon the meaning of this vision.

(*Tableau showing Malcour in the act of killing Isabel.*

Spirit gradually disappears).

Arthur. A dream! A dream! Is it of heaven or of hell? That is the question. My brain is dizzy. I am not myself. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Gaspard's Apartments.*

Enter GASPARD and BEAUMONT.

Gaspard. Believe me, Beaumont, it is always so. Indeed, if not for this, where is the profit we derive from that which we call wisdom? Tell me, did ever you compare a wise man with a fool, examining well their points of difference?

Beaumont. To me it has always been enough that I perceived the wise are few and far between ; whereas the race of fools is quite as thick as flies in summer.

Gaspard. So far, so good, but yet not far enough ; for in addition to this fact, have you ne'er marked the difference which exists between the chattering ape and he who measures so his actions, thoughts, and words, that there is nothing empty, nothing shallow, nothing void of some direct specific purpose ? If you have not, then do you learn it is a law which nature makes, that since there must be fools, 'tis well they should subserve their only use—to be the prey of those who are their betters.

Beaumont. Yet the weakness of accident is sometimes strong where the force of design is weak. But here is Mortimer. We shall have some news of his successes in his new departure.

Enter MORTIMER.

Gaspard. How now, Mortimer, how runs the world ? Or better still, how deals the skillful Cupid with your suit ?

Mortimer. So far the tide of fortune moves in my behalf. Indeed, 'twould seem that the desired end draws near when I shall reap the fruit of my designs.

Gaspard. Are you so well assured ? You know the saying, "there's many a slip between the cup and the lip."

Mortimer. Nonsense, Gaspard. 'Tis but your sport to banter me, the better to increase my appetite.

Beaumont. What if that womanly weakness which you count upon, should prove superior even to the pressure of adversity ? Ere this the time has been when virtue has withstood the pressure of temptation. What has been once may be again.

Mortimer. Nonsense, gentlemen. This is not the case. My word to it, that woman after all is but an embodiment of frailty, made for weaknesses and little sins—a superficial creature blown about by every gust of fashion and caprice. Besides, in my experience I

have never known a woman who could not, like a trout, be caught by tickling.

Gaspard. Admitting this, if even you obtain the prize, what do you gain in gaining it?

Mortimer. Gain! Gain everything. Gain that which filled my early dreams, and which, till Malcour crossed my path, seemed destined to be mine.

Gaspard. For my part, I would rather sit up day and night to catch a flea, than be as you, the victim of a fascination which exacts so much to give so little.

Mortimer. No, by my soul this is not so; nor can my thoughts be measured by your cold, dispassionate mind. To you it is as though my fancy teemed with nothingness. To me it is a warm and fervent glow, as when the earth, awaking from a long and dreary winter sleep, puts on her floral robes, the birds renew their song, and all things echo with a thousand tongues the glorious theme that spring has come again.

Beaumont. Your passion gives you eloquence, if even it deprives you of your common sense.

Mortimer. The keen delight, the mingling of two souls lost in one fond, one long embrace, the thousand joys that come within the sweet delicious hour of fruition. To me these things are real. Yea, insomuch that I will make no pause till I have plucked the rose, possessed its beauty, and enjoyed its perfume. My word to it, she shall be mine. [Exit.]

Gaspard. So runs the world, and so suppose 'twill always be. Once let a man believe himself in love, and he most surely plays the fool.

Beaumont. 'Tis for this reason Cupid's painted blind, lest seeing, we should see ourselves as others see us, and thus cease to play these antics in the name of love.

Gaspard. It comes to this; that after all, there is a good deal of the monkey in the best of us.—[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.—*A Room in Malcour's House. Malcour examining a casket of jewels.*

Malcour. Say, say, my better genius, shall it be done, or shall I spurn the deed, preferring rather to be lost at once than stoop to meanness that I may perchance be saved? To sin against so sweet a saint makes sin indeed a horrid monster, blighting all the fairest charms of earth, while hell resounds with its applause. Oh! earth, oh! heaven, wherefore is this so? No, no, I can not do it. My soul repels the thought.—(*Pauses thoughtfully.*) And yet there is a force in Gaspard's words which it is hard to set aside. Call it caprice of fortune, fate, destiny, or any other name we please, 'tis all the same. We are that which we are, because we can not help ourselves; and being the slaves of circumstance, are driven this way, that way, as conditions change, and chance may favor vice or virtue for the moment. It shall be done. The end must justify the means. (*Takes jewels from casket, and conceals them in his pockets.*) 'Tis after all, the desperation of a dying man. If I survive, 'tis well. If otherwise, 'tis but the end of that which I already feel.—(*Preparing as if to go.*)

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. Malcour, I am here that I may speak with you, plead with you. Will you not hear me?

Malcour. To yield to this I am compelled. Yet would I charge you to be brief; not as is the custom of your sex; expending time and words, as though they had no value.

Beatrice.—Alas! my husband, this from you, and that so undeserved! Ah! me, 'tis a discovery, sad indeed, when we perceive that our idols are but stone; cold, dull, inanimate, and deaf to our prayers.

Malcour. Beatrice, have I not told you there are moods with me, in which it is unwise to force me into conversation; seasons, in fact, in which I am so busied with my thoughts, that I would fain shut out

all knowledge of the outside world. In moments such as these, 'tis solitude alone that I desire.

Beatrice. Still, still, the same old strain ; deceiving most where it appears most plausible !

Malcour. As I'm alive, your manner startles me. What does it mean ?

Beatrice. Extinguish not the light of conscience ; and therein you may see the truth. Need I say more ?

Malcour. Tut, tut, Beatrice, this is nonsense ; the merest folly on your part.

Beatrice. Not so. I now am past that time, when, like a child, I could be set aside ; contented still to dream and dream ; unconscious of the real world in which I live.

Malcour (aside.) 'Tis clear she knows the worst. I knew the voice of scandal would defeat my plans. *(To BEATRICE.)* Sweet wife, some other time your wishes shall be heard. At present, I have neither time nor inclination for the subject.

Beatrice. Nay, nay, if this had been enough, I had been, long ere this, like Niobe, a monument of silent grief. But no ; 'twere easier by a dew-drop to appease the flaming fires of a vexed volcano, than to extinguish that which burns within an injured woman's breast. If you would have me silent, you must change my sex, my personality ; but until then, I can not feel this aching void within my heart, and say to my despairing soul, be still.

Malcour. And has it come to this ; to this, the worst of all my troubles, and that which I feared the most ? But is not this adversity's mode of making war, contented not to conquer by one ill, that she must overwhelm us with a legion ?

Beatrice. Nay, rather say is it the proper course of manhood, first to sacrifice itself in the pursuit of vice, and then by a deception, make the evil doubly great ? Alas ! for me, that this should be the end of all my fondest dreams ; those dreams in which my love portrayed a future full of golden joys and chaste delights ; a Paradise, in fact, in which our souls should move in gentle harmony, and all things catch the sweet vibra-

tion of our thoughts. Such were my hopes. What they are now, are answered by those gathering clouds which you have conjured up by your dark deeds.

Malcour. So, so, my gentle one, this is your position ; is it ? Come, come ; this being the case, 'tis best that we should part. When husbands lose the confidence of their wives, 'tis time there be an end. Besides it suits me in my present mood, that I be free and unrestrained. The world is wide, and there is room for both of us.

Beatrice. The world indeed is wide. But be you not deceived ; it is not wider than a woman's love ; that wondrous power which defies all time, all space ; o'erleaping even death, to live forever in another life.

Malcour. Beatrice, I have resolved that we must part. For your own happiness, it is better that it should be so.

Beatrice. No, no ; you can not, shall not leave me thus. See how my heart attuned to yours in happier hours, seeks still for its accustomed sympathy ; while folding you within these arms, I swear there is no world to me where you are not ; no light, no beauty where you are not as the sun, the source of all my life.

Malcour. Oh ! woman, woman ; yours is indeed a power which might make the strength of Hercules appear a child. As a man, I feel it ; I acknowledge it. But ah ! it is too late ; too late. 'Tis painful for the diseased eye to look upon the light ; and so it is with me. In the serene expression of your purity, I see myself not as I was, but as I am. This is too much ; the picture startles me. I can no longer look upon the sight. That mirror is indeed a faithful one, when vice beholds itself in virtue's glass. Oh ! no, it is too much ; I can not bear the sight. (*Going*).

Beatrice. As I'm alive, you shall not leave me thus ; no, not even though you were a fiend a thousand times more dark than what you are. That you have fallen, I admit ; and with my copious tears deplore the fact. But, let me ask you, is not human nature at its best, a poor, weak, unreliable thing ? Ay, even that the best men sometimes fall within the meshes of an un-

expected snare ! Nor is this all. With them the gentle dew of mercy is their heritage. Why should it be otherwise with you ?

Malcour. No more, Beatrice, no more. Henceforth our spheres of life are far asunder as the poles. Yours is that fairer portion, where the light of virtue fills the world with a perpetual glory. Mine, that darker state where vice enthroned, engenders foul corruption and disease. (*Going.*)

Beatrice. Not so, not so. E'en as the moon and stars keep o'er the earth their constant watch, so will I be to thee. Death and destruction I can bear, but separation never. Within these arms ; here is your world.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A parlor, handsomely furnished.*

Enter EUDORA and MORTIMER.

Mortimer. Can it be possible that she suffers this unmoved ? To my mind, such conduct is enough to sicken any woman.

Eudora. And so it doubtless will. But you must bear a little patience ere she can be so far weaned as to regard your suit with favor. It is by small degrees, with subtlety combined, more than by forcible attempts, that we must take the citadel.

Mortimer. Patience indeed ! Pray tell me what have I to do with patience, now that all my plans have been fulfilled, and Fortune, like a benignant goddess, smiles upon my hopes ? Instead of living still in patient waiting, this is the time when sweet fruition should succeed expectancy. Pry'thee, therefore, do not trifle with my feelings.

Eudora. Believe me, I have done my best ; suggest-

ing here and there such thoughts as in the end will bring forth fruit such as we desire.

Mortimer. The process may be wise, but 'tis too slow—at least too slow for me.

Eudora. Although some women may be purchased by the merest show of flattery, a little tinsel, anything in fact which seems; it is not so with all. In this respect, though there may be of Helens more, we still will sometimes meet with a Penelope, serenely powerful in her chastity.

Mortimer. Can it be possible then that I am to be defeated thus while yet my star seemed daily brightening in its glory? No, no, it cannot, must not be. 'Tis but an idle weakness, which would set the feeble flicker of a woman's virtue 'gainst the pressure of temptation. Do you devise the means, and I will stake my chances on my powers of persuasion.

Eudora. It is her custom in the silent hours of the night to bewail her fate, unheard by any mortal ear.

Mortimer. A golden chance, while she laments her fate, to tempt her with the promise of a brighter future. This night let it be done.

Eudora. Hence with me, and I will secrete you in her favorite haunt. But, mark me, though your tongue be dipped in honeyed eloquence, I do not promise you success.

Mortimer. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Besides, if even I should fail, I am no poorer in my failure. Let us away at once. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A garden—Night.*

Enter MORTIMER.

Mortimer. A glorious night, and well adapted to the subtle pleading of love's sweet discourse. But soft, methinks I see the first fair glimpses of the rising moon. (*Looking attentively.*) Yes, yes, 'tis she; the brightest star of all earth's brightest constellations. Here will I hide myself. Where Cupid is most sly, he oft is most successful. [*Conceals himself.*]

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. Let me reflect. Can it be so that I, who but a few months since beheld the world as 'twere a mirror, wherein each moment seemed a thing of beauty and a form of joy ; that I, for whom the sun and moon and all the stars seemed but as music's sweetest instruments, keeping time with the harmonious flow and rhythm of my thoughts ; that I, the sweet possessor of all these, should come to this ? Alas ! it is a cruel lot when we, being so near heaven, are so suddenly plunged into the abyss of woe.

Mortimer (coming forward). And yet, fair angel, it may happen that the clouds will unexpectedly break, and fortune once more scatter roses in your path.

Beatrice. Sir, what may this mean ? This bold intrusion ill becomes a gentleman.

Mortimer. Pardon me, madam, if in my zeal and warmth of soul I have o'erstepped the limits of discretion. If I am captivated by your charms, it is the beauty which enslaves that you must blame, and not the slave for being enslaved by beauty.

Beatrice. Your language startles me. Know you, sir, to whom you speak ?

Mortimer. To one who in my earlier days I oft have looked on with a tender eye ; my fond imagination dreaming oft of golden hours yet to be—sweet seasons wherein our souls should melt into a soft embrace, and morning ever wake us to delight.

Beatrice (aside). Can this be fiction or reality ?

Mortimer. These were my thoughts and these my sentiments ; when in an instant came a change ; a cruel change, which shattered all my hopes. I had a friend ; he also saw, admired, and succeeded.

Beatrice. My husband ?

Mortimer. Ay, madam, your husband, and till then my friend. Thus you have heard the past. Now may I tell you of the present ?

Beatrice. Enough I have already heard. The sequel would offend me as a wife.

Mortimer. Nay, nay, thou beauteous being, repulse

me not with the cold words of an indignant virtue. Reflect on your position, and then tell me if you find no warrant for my suit. Indeed, think you that beauty such as yours was meant for nothing better than the chilling blast of cold adversity? Look on the picture; then on that which I would offer you as your future.

Beatrice. Beware, sir, lest you place too slight a value on my womanhood.

Mortimer. Be mine the task to cherish, not to mar the beauty of so fair a flower.

Beatrice. Sir, do you perceive this ring? (*Shows wedding ring*). As an expression of that love which once I gave; and having given once, can never give again, it is a symbol of eternity. As such, let it proclaim me sacred, though my troubles may invite compassion.

Mortimer. 'Tis but a little effort that it costs, no more. Say if you will, that you will take my words into your private thoughts, and ponder them. This done, I will believe myself the richest man in all this wealthy universe. Denying this, then would I have you think that you are heaven's moon, and I a maniac who adores thee. (*Kneels to her*).

Beatrice. Arise, sir, and desist. As a man of honor you will encroach no farther on an unprotected woman. (*Mortimer rises*).

Mortimer. So beautiful, and yet so cruel!

Beatrice. Henceforth I charge you to be silent, sir; while also do you learn that woman is above this pitious reasoning which would hold her favor as a thing to traffic for. Among the countless treasures which this world affords, a woman's reputation is the fairest gem; her love the only thing which knows no price but love; her virtue that which shines with its own radiant light, though sun, and moon, and stars conceal themselves. What, therefore, though the clouds should gather, and my path be dark? Shall I, for this, forget myself, and sacrifice my womanhood? No, never, never.

Mortimer. From lips so fair, such words of cruelty

ne'er should come. Deal with me as you will, I will be still your slave.

Beatrice. No more, I'll hear no more ; nor is there aught upon this earth that can dissuade me from my resolution. If it be so, that I must suffer for my husband's faults, so let it be. Far better this, than quench that light, which having lost, makes me unworthy of my sex. If I be rich in virtue, I am still myself. If poor in this, then poor indeed. [*Exit.*]

Mortimer. The tide has turned ; and fortune favors me no more. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—*A Room dimly lighted.*

MALCOUR, rousing as it were from sleep.

Malcour. It is of no avail ; I cannot sleep. The mind disturbed denies the body rest. But hark, did not I hear a sound ? Who can be moving at this silent hour ?

Enter ISABEL.

Why, sweet daughter, how is this ? Methought that long ere this you were soft hushed within the oblivious world of sleep.

Isabel. Did not I hear you call ? It seemed to me I surely heard your voice.

Malcour. Perchance you did. It is a habit that I sometimes have to think aloud. But no matter, sweet. Do you retire to your rest. My thoughts will soon have past ; and I will follow your example.

Isabel. Methought the night was meant for sleep, and not for thinking. Here will I rest a while. (*Throws herself on a lounge*). While yet this cloud is on your brow I feel I should be near.

Malcour. While I in contemplation of night's silent beauty may haply find an antidote to my troubled mind. (*Sits at the window and looks out*). 'Tis midnight ; and all nature seems as 'twere a sleeping infant, smiling on it's mother's breast ; while man, exhausted by his daily toil, sinks into a sweet forgetful-

ness of life. For me alone there is no peace. Oh ! conscience, conscience, wherefore is this so ? (*Rises*). Ay, even that I seem a lone and outcast wretch, for whom the darkness is more welcome than the day ; all things beneath the moon appearing haggard, wild, and most unseasonable ; the universe all out of joint ; and I the inmate of a world wherein each thought is but a knell that calls me to the grave. (*A momentary pause*). Yes, yes, the grave ! There is the end to which it seems that I am tending fast, and where alone I can forget my troubles in the sleep of death—that endless sleep, the only boon the wretched mind can feel. If, like a fool, I cling to life, 'tis but to die ten thousand deaths in living. If I should die, who knows but in the change I may be plunged in Lethe's stream, and thus blot out all memory of the past. It may be so, it must be so ; whereas it is a vulgar superstition only which deters us from the grave

(*Goes to the closet, from which he takes a dagger, and then continues, approaching ISABEL.*)

She sleeps, unconscious of the storm that rages in her father's breast. A thought ! a thought ! Methinks I'll take her with me to another world. And yet, if I should kill her now while yet the blush of heaven lingers on her virgin brow, and virtue breathes through all her thoughts ; then may it seem indeed indeed enough to make the very angels weep. But wherefore do I pause ; affrighted from my purpose by these idle sentiments ? It shall be done ; it must be done. Sleep on, therefore, gentle angel, as you are ; nor shall you stir from your sweet dreams, till waking in another world, you thank the father's hand which freed you from this life of sorrow, disappointment, and dull care. Come, death, thou friend of all who have no friend beside.

As he is in the act of killing her, enter BEATRICE and EUDORA.

Beatrice. Great heavens! Malcour, how is this? Have you so far fallen as to stain your hands with innocent blood?

Malcour. 'Tis but a short-lived reverie, nothing more; a passing mood in which my thoughts run wild, and lead me on I know not where.

Beatrice. Not so. As you well know, this is the truth half told, and not that frank confession due me as your wife.

Eudora. Rich in guile, and practised in deceit, you have deceived us oft. Between us now let there be truth

Malcour. Think not, cold, heartless woman, I will yield a tame submission to your words. Yours is that part where every thought conceals an artifice. Think not, therefore, that I understand you not.

Eudora. Evading still the point at issue, eh? But it is ever thus. When villains seem most sensitive, then are they most to be suspected.

Malcour. Beatrice, you love me not; else would you not permit such language in your presence.

Beatrice. It is not what is charged, but what is proved, that makes up our condemnation. So let it be with me; while furthermore I swear, that could you look within my soul, and see the deep, undying love that, like the Vestal Virgin's fire, burns forever there; then would you see, indeed, a sight that might resolve you into tears for all the wrongs that you have done. For you, however, where is the warrant for that crime which even now you had committed but for our unexpected presence? Oh! Malcour, Malcour, that it should have come to this!

Malcour. It is the hand of fate that makes us what we are.

Eudora (contemptuously). As though there ever was a fate, the thread of which we did not weave for ourselves! Shame, shame, say I, upon the man who bolsters up his sins by a device so base as this. [*Exit.*

Malcour. So moves the world ; and we are driven by this all-pervading atmosphere of circumstance, this mighty power which controls us all in spite of ourselves. Believe me, Beatrice, that this thing which we call murder, is the only medicine suited to despair.

Isabel (waking from her sleep). What do I see and hear? Am I awake, or do I dream?

Malcour (aside). Would that I had killed her ere she had discovered such a scene as this.

Isabel. Still silent! Tell me, my good mother, wherefore is this so? Or you, my ever kind and watchful father, tell me why is this—this cloud upon your brow, this marked excitement in my mother's manner? Methought I also heard some strange allusion made to murder.

Malcour. If it be murder to extinguish life when there is nothing left for which to live ; if it be murder to transplant a tender rose that it may bloom unsullied in another world ; then, my gentle Isabel, did I seek to murder thee. Yea, even as I stood upon the brink of desperation, struggling with my conscience and my love, it seemed to me 'twere better we should leave this world of sorrow, darkness and despair. Say, gentle angel, will you go? The world beyond is brighter than the one which is.

Isabel. Alas! for me, 'tis but the wreck of what was once my father that I look upon. Teach me to do whate'er I may, and I'll obey, if it will only bring my father back to me. But oh! to see you thus, the victim of a wild, disordered brain ; this is enough to bid me water all the earth with tears, put out the sun, and drape the universe with black.

Beatrice. While I enshrouded in a widow's deepest weeds, can only weep and weep, and, weeping, curse the hour I was ever born. Say, say, my husband, is it so that the fair sun will rise no more to kill the night?

Malcour. 'Tis past, 'tis past, and ne'er will come again. For me this world has now become a charnel house, wherein I can perceive no forms but those of

spectral shape—grim demons as it were, whose only pleasure is to torture me. 'Tis midnight with me in my soul, and I can look no more upon the light of day.

Beatrice. But Heaven is so kind, that the recording angel oftentimes blots out our evils with a tear.

Malcour. In vain we pluck the arrow from the wound; supposing thus, we can dispense a healing balm. Let him who can, drag out a weary life; believing that by torture self-inflicted he can cleanse the stain of sin. Not so with me. High as the stars above the earth, my earlier thoughts did soar above the common herd of men. Temptation came upon me in an evil hour, and I fell. Now I am fallen, I can never live to think of what I was by what I am. Then to the gates of death; stay not my passage; oh! forbid me not. When I am gone, your precious tears will make fair flowers grow upon my grave. Alive, I am unworthy of your love. Farewell, farewell. (*To ISABEL.*) And you, my tender violet, fare thee well. (*To both.*) Be thus when I am dead; and, by the sweet celestial purity of your souls, you will attract the choicest hosts of heaven as your guardians. Where virtue is, there in an especial sense is the protecting eye of the Omnipotent. Farewell, farewell. In death alone is my relief.

(*As he is in the act of stabbing himself, FRANKLIN enters hastily, and seizes his arm.*)

Franklin. Hold, madman, hold. This must not, shall not be.

(*Curtain falls to slow music.*)

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Street.*

Enter ARTHUR and BEAUMONT. BEAUMONT attempting to speak.

Arthur. Be still, thou vulgar, prating knave. Already is the air too thick with falsehood and deceit.

Beaumont. Believe me, it is but the truth I speak.

Arthur. Truth, indeed ! Tut, tut, I would as soon believe the magpie could produce the music of the nightingale, as that you could speak the truth. Why, man, turn where I will, 'tis falsehood everywhere. Ay, e'en that baseness penetrates into the minutest corners of society. Appearances deceive ; and no man is that which he seems.

Beaumont. The danger is with partial sinners, as it is with partial saints. They form a sort of undivided territory whereon the hosts of light and darkness alternate in their possession ; whereas with those who, like myself, believe in sin by wholesale, we at least have this advantage, that we sin consistently.

Arthur. And in the face of this, you dare to say that you can speak the truth ?

Beaumont. The man who dares to do his misdeeds in the noon-day sun needs not the cloak of sly hypocrisy. But enough of this. In our dealings you will find me honest.

Arthur. The Devil was sick, the Devil became a saint ; the Devil was well, the Devil a saint was he. May it not be so with you ?

Beaumont (showing his purse, which is somewhat torn and empty). See you this purse ?

Arthur. Such as it is, I do.

Beaumont. As empty as a woman's promise, eh ?

Arthur. More properly, like most men's characters, full of holes. But what of this to our purpose ?

Beaumont. A tale there hangs thereby, as you shall see ; for while my comrades have their pockets full to

overflowing through their foul play, I am without a dollar. Thus do you understand me.?

Arthur. Revenge ! Is this your aim ?

Beaumont. Within that sentence you embrace it all. My soul is up in arms. My injuries demand redress.

Arthur. Can I rely upon your word ? For mark you, if you trifle with me in my present mood, I'll deal with you as though you were a rat ; so soon will I despatch you to the shades below.

Beaumont. Believe me, it is as I say. If you would wreak your vengeance on the men who by their base insidious plots did bring the generous Malcour to his ruin, I am your servant. 'Twixt them and me there stands a large account. Till I have settled it, I'll have no thoughts but those of vengeance.

Arthur. This being the case, be thou my slave. When rogues fall out, the honest man obtains his due. Come, come, let us at once to our end ; for vengeance to be fruitful must be swift. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.--*A Room scantily furnished.*

ISABEL *alone, and in mourning.*

Isabel (trimming lamp). Truly this is a most uneven world, in which the innocent often bear the burdens of the guilty : while those who merit least seem most to bask in fortune's sunshine.

Enter BEATRICE, also in mourning. She enters without speaking, and takes a seat as if lost in thought.

Isabel. How now, sweet mother, do you feel refreshed ?

Beatrice. Thank you, my child. I have had a pleasant sleep ; and oh ! such pleasant dreams.

Isabel. Thrice happier, then, did you sleep on, unconscious of your troubles.

Beatrice. Not so. To do this would be to merge myself into a dreamy nothingness ; a state which none could well desire.

Isabel. If in losing our consciousness, we should also lose our troubles, are we not richer by the loss? For my part, I would much prefer annihilation to this life of sorrow, sadness, and despair; this endless chain, where fear succeeds to fear, and ills on ills attend.

Beatrice. In our gloomiest hours the star of hope forsakes us not. Though poor in earthly goods, we still are blest in this—that we can hope. But you shall hear my dream.

Isabel. Be it so. But, mother, you are so pale. I fear the excitement, little as it is, is too much for you.

Beatrice. 'Tis but the outflow of my feelings. I will be better presently. (*Weeps, leaning on Isabel*).

Isabel. Come, come, I'll hold your heart to mine. Here you shall weep your full, while in my love I'll kiss your tears away. (*Aside*). And yet 'tis hard that one so pure, so true, should suffer thus.

Beatrice (*recovering herself*). Now for my dream. Do you attend, and see if you agree with my interpretation. It was the solemn rite of my dead husband's obsequies; and as I stood beside the corpse, deep buried in my grief; behold a marvelous scene occurred. The coffin sank into the yawning earth, but my dear husband stood erect as when alive. An instant more, when lo! a bright and glorious rainbow spanned the arch between the heavens and the earth; a thousand sweet, harmonious voices fell upon my ear; and I awoke.

Enter FRANKLIN, excitedly.

Franklin. And waking, live to find your dream is realized; while even now returning sunshine bids you lay aside these suits of woe. For weeping we will substitute the songs of praise; and in the fullness of our new-born joy discard all thoughts that are not tintured with the beauty of the smiling morn.

Beatrice. Why, good Franklin, how is this? So unlike is it to your usual self, that I can scarce believe my senses. Till now your voice has been the

one to counsel resignation to my fate. Whence, therefore, is this change by which the man of gray hairs, wisdom and experience, gives place to youthful buoyancy?

Franklin. If I am happy, 'tis on your account—first, that Malcour is not dead, as we supposed; and second, that Arthur has returned; a man in all respects, and bent upon the resurrection of your hopes: his happiness.

Beatrice. My husband living! No, no; this is too much; a joy too sudden to be true. I will regard it but as 'twere a passing meteor which illumines my sky; a moment it enchants me by its beauty, and 'tis gone.

Isabel. A bright and glorious dream, too beautiful to be true.

Franklin. Think you, my children, I would trifle with your feelings thus? Not so. My tidings, though appearing strange, are not more strange than true. But see, even as I speak, experience proves my words.

Enter ARTHUR hastily.

Arthur. Isabel; my life, my angel!

Isabel. Auspicious hour that restores my hopes. (*Falls into Arthur's arms.*) (*Arthur.*) Sweet soul; the shock is too much for her nerves. Forgive me, love; I am to blame for being so sudden.

Isabel (recovering herself). Not so, my love; not so. Indeed, should all my life to come be one continued scene of troubles, the pleasure of this blissful moment would suffice to counterbalance all my griefs. And yet I scarcely can believe I am awake.

Arthur. Joy for the present moment, sweet one; joy to-day. Let this be our maxim for the present. Meantime, I would unto your good mother, pay my due respects. I know she spurned me once, but that is past. (*Approaching Beatrice, and leading Isabel by the hand.*) (*To BEATRICE.*) Madam, with all due respect, I pray you to accept me as your son. For the past, I can only say, let it be buried in oblivion. For

the future, I do pledge myself allied to you in all the bonds of friendship, love, and duty.

Beatrice. Accept, good sir, my thanks ; though in my poverty, I am even poor in this. To-morrow will be the anniversary of my wedding day. Let it be therefore chosen as the time when you shall seal your loves in the sweet bonds of matrimony.

Isabel. Oh ! blissful hour, when first a mother dares to speak in nature's voice ; nor base nor mercenary thoughts impede the course of love.

Arthur. Say also thrice auspicious day, which giving love so great a victory, shall also bring your father back to life. (*To Franklin.*) Franklin, I will meet you in an hour hence. (*To Isabel.*) Meantime, my love, let us enjoy the sweet fruition of this blissful hour. 'Twill be a little while at most 'ere Cynthia will have kissed the western sea. Ere she has left us, I would bid her send Aurora in all haste, arrayed, too, in her fairest robes ; that when she comes, awaking nature seeing it such a glorious morn, the birds will sing their sweetest song, and singing, wonder why the earth appears so bright.

Isabel. And all the world will answer, "'tis our wedding day." Say is it not so, sweet love ? (*Exeunt Arthur and Isabel.*)

Beatrice (weeping). Still, still, they come ; but they are tears of joy and not of sorrow ; the only tribute I can pay to that Superior Power which has once more bid my drooping soul arise. A long, long night it seems, that I have passed ; and now the first fair tokens of the dawn show in the east. The night was dark, and I had many, many changing dreams. Now it appears I stand abroad in the fresh air, and feel the fragrant breath of morning on my brow. Yes, yes ; I can but raise my eyes to Heaven, filled with tears, since therein I may best express the fullness of my soul. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE III.—*A Wood—The Moon Rising—Malcour Comes from a Cave—His Appearance Being Somewhat Dilapidated.*

Malcour. Alone, yet not alone; since even in the deepest stillness of the night, I can not put my consciousness away. Ay, even that the calmness of this place becomes a torture to my mind, in that it turns my thoughts within, and in my solitude, makes me more fully know myself. Here, here it lies. The disease is within, and therefore all the beauty of the world is lost to me! Ah! verily, it is a truth, that he who has his conscience clear, may everywhere enjoy the bright and glorious day, while he whose soul is tainted with the guilt of sin, benighted walks beneath the midday sun; in his distracted slumbers, starting e'en as if pursued by angry demons, of most hideous shape. (*Voices without.*) But hark, did I not hear the sound of human voices? Methought I had escaped the thoroughfares of men.

Enter FRANKLIN and ARTHUR.

Hold, gentlemen, this is my territory. You must advance no farther.

Franklin. Fear not, Malcour, we are friends.

Malcour. Friends indeed! For me there are no friends that are not parasites, while honesty is but an empty name; no more. No, no; I have too deeply read mankind, to be deceived by this fair sounding phrase. 'Tis but a name invented to deceive; full of fair seeming, it is true, but at the core, delusion all. Besides, I have selected this abode, because I wished to bid the world adieu.

Franklin. What if we prove to you that this is an instance where the hand of Providence intervenes for a beneficent purpose?

Malcour. And is there still a Providence? Methought this was a vain delusion of my earlier days, an empty dream which many years of suffering long ere this has scattered to the winds. Behold in me an

instance of what little interest Providence feels in the affairs of men.

Franklin. Shame, Malcour, on such base and fiendish reasoning. The ills which we endure are our own ; our blessings are from a superior Power. But of this enough. Accept our proposition to renounce this miserable life, and by the aid of Arthur's friendship, be as once you were ;—a man.

Malcour. Why sirs, this is more like fiction than like fact. 'Tis but a few years since I spurned this man as though he were a worm, and now he comes to me as my deliverer. No, no ; this is too romantic to be real. Leave me, gentlemen, I beseech you. Leave me to myself.

Arthur. Not so ; lest in so doing, we should undo that which we have already done. As you will see, there have been strange, mysterious forces operating in your interest.

Malcour. Good sirs, I do entreat you trifle no more with the feelings of a broken spirit. With me, the time has now arrived when I can no longer sit beneath a summer sky, and mark the fair, fantastic forms which light and cloud assume as they embrace. 'Tis now the time when black-eyed night succeeds to day, and nature wears her darkest robes in common mourning with my sorrow. Surely this is a picture dark enough to warn away all jesting and frivolity.

Arthur. Nay, by my soul, I will be heard ; nor is there aught but truth and friendship in my words. It was a night, just such a night as this ; yon glorious moon diffusing o'er the earth her silver light ; a dewy freshness breathing through the silent air ; all nature resting sweetly in its placid rest ; when lo ! my mother's spirit stood before me.

Malcour. Your mother's spirit ! What, a ghost ! Desist, I pray you, sir. (*A moment's pause.*) But what are ghosts to me, for whom each moment is some spectral shape, more hideous than all your ghosts ? Proceed. Your subject wins my ear.

Arthur. Nay, start not in surprise till you have

heard the rest. Thus do you listen. The smile of Heaven yet upon her face; her eyes reflecting a celestial light more beautiful than many stars; her voice as 'twere the softest of sweet music's gentle strains; she spoke to me of you.

Malcour. Of me; a man in whom the higher spheres can feel no interest!

Franklin. Still will you yield to the delusions of a diseased mind!

Malcour. Call it delusion, if you please. But, tell me, does there live a man who can escape his shadow? Not so, good sirs. This never has been yet; nor will it ever be. The world at best is but a mirror, wherein the reflex of our inner life determines what we see.

Arthur. True as this is, 'tis also true that there is no state, however dark, but we may sometimes see the Angel Mercy beaming on us with a tender glance; as when a mother looks upon her wayward child.

Malcour. Almost, gentlemen, you persuade me. But tell me, Franklin, how speaks the world concerning me?

Franklin. As of a man, who meaning well, while walking in his sleep fell down a precipice. Such are the words of some.

Malcour. This is the opinion of the few. What of the many?

Franklin. What, of the vulgar herd? It matters not what they may think, when there is one who mourning for your loss as a true-hearted woman only can, still clings to past associations, and the memories of her early love.

Malcour. Franklin, I beseech you name her, not. The whips and stings of an indignant world I may endure. But oh! to think of her as she has been, and as she is; this is too much. Yea, even as I speak, methinks I see her tender eyes bedimmed with tears; while gently floating heavenward, her prayers are as the fragrant breath of early morning flowers; her every thought the deep expression of a wondrous love. Oh! Franklin, what a heaven had I there! But I

must hold my tongue, since language is too feeble for my thoughts. (*Turns aside deeply affected.*)

Arthur. At last we strike the key-note of his soul.

Franklin (to MALCOUR). Your anguish, Malcour, I can but too well understand. It is the human in our nature which leads us into sin. It is the still small voice descending from above which leads us to repent.

Malcour. Our characters are but slender wares, more easily broken than repaired. But oh! to think of her; there is the point that scourges me. Say, gentlemen, do you assure me her forgiveness?

Franklin. With all the fullness of a woman's love, I will engage that she receives you.

Arthur. And so do I; while also Isabel in the gentle ministrations of her love will nobly do her part; myself not wanting in my duty as your son.

Malcour. Can it be true, or is it that I live an instant in some mystic realm! Say, gentlemen, is this real, or do I wander in my thoughts; believing that I look once more upon the glorious sun?

Franklin. Dark as your night has been, there never was a night which did not have an end. Indeed, 'twere strange were it not so; since all men need at times the soft compassion of sweet mercy.

Malcour. The dew of mercy falls not where 'tis undeserved.

Franklin. Go, ask the sun why on all men he pours his beams; the stars, why on the good and bad they shine alike. Do this; and by their answer you will learn why mercy is not partial in her smiles; and why in every corner of this universal earth, she seeks to bind the broken heart, and heal the raging fever of despair.

Malcour. Auspicious hour, wherein earth and heaven meet in their embrace! Lead on, good sirs, and I will follow you. If it be so that mercy lifts the veil of night, and in the place of darkness, bids me look upon the rosy east, it is not well that I should question, but obey. For thee, my solitude, fare thee well. I sought you for your charms. Now they are lost, farewell.

Come on, good friends, if I must to the world again, let it be done at once ; lest hesitating, I may change my mind.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Room.*

BEATRICE, *looking out of the window at the rising sun.*

Beatrice. All hail, thou glorious orb, that by your presence bids the world awake to life.

Enter ISABEL.

Isabel. So early up, sweet mother? Methought that I should be the first to see the sun. Say, mother, does it not appear to you as though the earth upon this morn came nearer heaven? To me it seems that even nature's silent things are breathing a deep beauty and an earnest praise such as I have never known before.

Beatrice. It is the world within that makes the world without so bright. In fact, such is the nature of true happiness, that while it quickens all the finer elements of our being, it also makes the earth appear more beautiful. Like twin sisters of celestial birth, happiness and beauty move always hand in hand.

A ring at the door-bell.

Isabel. Who can that be? (*Goes to side*). Here are several vases of flowers, mother. Did you order them?

Beatrice. 'Tis well. Let them be set in such profusion as will best express the fragrant beauty of our new-born hopes.

ISABEL takes flowers and arranges them.

Isabel. How beautiful they are. God might have made the earth without its flowers. But oh! had this been so, what gems of beauty we had lost? In eastern lands they talk in flowers, do they not?

Beatrice. So it is said ; and well they may ; since after all, these are love's truest language, and the most perfect symbols of our purest thoughts. But it is getting late, and we have many things to do.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—*The same.*

Enter MALCOUR and takes his seat, deeply absorbed in thought. After a few moments he looks inquiringly around the room and rises.

Malcour. Has it then come to this, that from a wandering spirit seeking rest, yet finding none, I breathe once more within a sphere where all things speak of beauty and of peace? (*Approaches and examines the flowers*). Sweet flowers, too, those sweet expressions of our finest sentiments—affections, as it were, whose soft pulsations we can only hear when we have cleansed the dross from our souls. (*The sound of music in the distance*). But soft, did not I hear the sound of music? Yes, there it is again. Oh! how it steals into my soul, and bids my weary spirit to forget the past. Yes, yes, at last 'tis peace where all before was darkness and despair. Bright visions, too, how beautiful they seem! Fair forms, as though the fairest things of earth did vie with those of heaven. No, *all* of heaven, they are so passing beautiful. But see, she comes. The glorious east puts on its brightest hues ; and in her presence, beauteous Eden takes the place of death.

Enter BEATRICE, excitedly.

Beatrice (rushing up to Malcour and embracing him). Malcour, my husband.

Malcour (Beatrice leaning on him). Fair soul, may heaven henceforth make me worthy of your love. (*Kisses her affectionately*). See, how she weeps, and in the purity of her tears makes e'en the virgin snow appear

impure : each tear, in fact, a radiant gem more beautiful than all the costly pearls of earth. (*Looking at her intently and affectionately*). No, no, it is not true that there exist no angels on the earth. The fault is with ourselves ; that in our baser natures we perceive them not.

Beatrice (recovering herself). There, it is over now. The storm is past, and we will rest securely in each other's love.

Malcour. And let the past remain for ever in the voiceless grave.

Beatrice. For ever in the silent sleep of death let it remain. All that I ask is, that you may be a wiser man for your experience. This done, then will our life henceforth become a glorious summer, full of charms and chaste delights. Will you not grant me this ?

Malcour. Think you, my angel, I could look on your fair face, and find myself so base as to refuse ? No, Beatrice ; it is, after all, the stern discipline of experience which alone can make us men. This have I learned in sorrow and in tears. Now I awake to find my soul illumined by a new-born light. Be yours the task to keep its flame for ever bright and pure. In darker hours I withstood your influence. Now I am yours, with all my heart and soul. Be thou henceforth my angel, and my guide.

Enter ISABEL and ARTHUR. ISABEL dressed as a bride. Embraces MALCOUR affectionately.

Isabel. Thrice welcome hour that restores my father to these arms. Now may we say, indeed, the night is past ; and morning gives us promise of returning day.

Malcour. A morn, indeed, whereon your bridal blushes give a new-born beauty to the earth ; while fair Repentance, following in the footsteps of Remorse, relumes my fallen soul, and lights me back to heaven.

Arthur. Not to the past, but to the future let us look. It is the province of all men to err. It is the province of the wise man to renounce his sin, and woo the angel Virtue in the future.

Enter FRANKLIN.

Franklin. With all my heart, so may it be. Experience teaches many things, but none more clearly than the fact that in virtue alone is happiness.

Malcour. Shine on, fair virtue, thou celestial sun beneath whose presence even night is changed into a glorious, bright, eternal noon. Henceforth be thou my constant guest ; nor will I think of vice but to compare its vile proportions with your matchless beauty.

Franklin. Be this your aim, and all the fairest joys of earth will answer to your bidding. The highest wisdom, after all, does not so much consist in what we know, as what we are.



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